United Nations A/63/504

General Assembly

Distr.: General
24 October 2008

Original: English

Sixty-third session
Agenda item 45
Culture of peace

Note verbale dated 22 October 2008 from the Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Philippines to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to request the circulation of the Ministerial Statement adopted by the Third Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 25 September 2008 (see annex) in connection with agenda item 45.

08-56898 (E) 311008

Annex to the note verbale dated 22 October 2008 from the Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Ministerial Statement adopted by the Third Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace in New York on 25 September 2008

1. The Ministers of like-minded States* met on 25 September 2008 in New York City pursuant to the *2005 Declaration on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace*.

2. The Ministers renewed their commitment to the peaceful and harmonious coexistence of peoples of different faiths and cultures and to the promotion of human rights and dignity; and, in this regard, stressed the importance of developing sustainable, practical and action-oriented steps at all levels and across all sectors that will contribute to the promotion of human rights, development, a culture of peace and a culture of dialogue, tolerance, understanding, respect for diversity, and peaceful coexistence.

3. In accordance with the Ministerial Statement of the Second Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace on 27 September 2007, the Ministers agreed to adopt their work programme (see appendix) as part of their cooperative effort in the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue among cultures, civilizations and religions.

4. The Ministers agreed to meet at the margins of the general debate during the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly in 2009.

* People's Republic of Bangladesh, Republic of Belarus, Arab Republic of Egypt, Republic of the Gambia, Republic of Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Kingdom of Morocco, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of the Philippines, Republic of Senegal, Republic of Serbia, Slovak Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Kingdom of Thailand and Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Appendix

Work programme of the Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace

I. Background

In 2007, the second Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace (MMIDCP, 27 September 2007) agreed to exchange views on a possible work programme of MMIDCP, in connection with the upcoming summit review in 2010 of cooperative efforts in the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations. The First Informal Summit of Leaders on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace (13 September 2005) called upon the international community to intensify cooperation at the international, regional and national levels in the implementation of existing United Nations programmes for the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations. Likewise, the leaders upheld the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace as well as the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its programme of action, and supported the programmes and practical actions of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on this matter.

The First Ministerial Statement on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace (21 September 2006) offered some guidance on the work of MMIDCP by inviting States, international and regional organizations and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, to develop practical and action-oriented steps at the local, national, regional and international levels to further promote dialogue and mutual understanding among religions, cultures and civilizations. In the same statement, the Ministers agreed to initiate discussions in the United Nations on the positive role that public information dissemination can play in promoting tolerance, respect for and freedom of religion and belief.

The Second Ministerial Statement likewise offered some guidance on a possible work programme with the Ministers renewing their call for a strong and uniting message on the need to stress the importance of respecting freedom of religion and belief and other human rights, diversity in social systems, cultures and paths of development, promoting tolerance and opposing all forms of intolerance, exclusion, xenophobia or racism. In the same statement, the Ministers agreed to raise awareness of the international community about the importance of the commonly shared values, regardless of faiths or religions, such as non-violence, tolerance, respect for diversity which are fundamental to attaining social harmony and cohesion, and peaceful coexistence among people of different faiths, and encouraged the engagement of the youth and the media in promoting these commonly shared values through their participation in interfaith, interreligious and intercultural dialogues in national, international and United Nations frameworks. The Ministers also renewed their call for sustainable efforts to strengthen the dialogue of interreligious and intercultural understanding and cooperation for pace and appealed to the leaders and members of various faiths, religions and cultures to contribute to the promotion of mutual understanding and dialogue, prevention of conflicts and to the promotion of development, in particular the accomplishment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Given this background, the emerging elements towards actions, projects or initiatives that constitute a work programme of MMIDCP may include any of the following:

II. Proposed elements

1. Scope should encompass local, national, regional, international/interregional levels in promoting a culture of peace and dialogue

2. Practical, action-oriented and sustainable projects and activities

3. Support and complement the Millennium Development Goals, the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its programme of action and the UNESCO programme and practical actions on the matter (either under the general theme of culture, or under the special mainstreaming themes of culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations)

4. Involve the youth

5. Involve the media and public information dissemination aspects

6. Promote a culture of peace and a culture of dialogue, tolerance, understanding, respect for freedom of religion and belief, respect for diversity, and peaceful coexistence

III. Possible projects and initiatives

1. Incorporate the values of cultural diversity, tolerance, understanding, respect for freedom of religion and belief, and cultural and interreligious dialogue in the primary core curriculum (as part of values training)

2. Incorporate the principle of dialogue among religions into national plans and strategies on different themes, including sustainable development, in order to ensure that followers of all religions equally benefit from economic development and progress

3. Encourage the promotion of courses on interfaith dialogue into national education programmes in the secondary and tertiary levels, as well as encourage educational and academic exchanges among the States Members of MMIDCP and among Member States

4. Promote, where appropriate, the establishment of centres in universities and institutions of higher learning where students can have an added opportunity to interact and learn more about other cultures, religions and civilizations

5. Consider establishing youth exchange programmes where youths of one religion live for a short time with families of another religions/faith in order to foster an understanding and respect for different beliefs within the youth as well as the host families

6. Encourage the establishment of community-based intercultural and interreligious dialogues among various cultures and adherents of different religions to promote cooperation in multi-ethnic societies, facilitate and foster personal contacts and promote cooperation towards national goals

7. Consider establishing media exchange programmes where members of the media are encouraged to witness successful inter-communal experiences in other

countries, perhaps with different religions/faiths, in order to promote the values of tolerance and diversity

8. Consider ways to enhance the exchange of best practices between and among national Governments, civil society, including the media, in the field of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, cooperation, understanding and tolerance, including through, inter alia, the conduct of public awareness seminars on the issue

9. Promote the participation of media experts in international and regional forums on interreligious dialogue, interfaith cooperation, and dialogue among cultures and civilizations

10. Continue to highlight programmes that carry out intercultural and interreligious dialogue and promote respect, tolerance, understanding and cooperation among various cultures and religions in the appropriate international forums.

11. Consider the following within the United Nations framework:

(a) A joint letter by the States members of MMIDCP to the President of the General Assembly requesting the invitation of prominent religious personalities in the conduct of a high-level dialogue and/or informal interactive hearing on the issue to be held within the events of the 2010 International Year for Rapprochement of Cultures

(b) A joint statement by the States members of MMIDCP, on a case-by-case basis, particularly at the events to be held within the 2010 International Year for Rapprochement of Cultures

(c) Promoting the idea of a United Nations-led consolidation of all past and ongoing studies on the issue of sources of religious intolerance, with the aim of promoting tolerance, mutual understanding and friendly coexistence among peoples.